

**Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) Validation Study:  
Final Report**

Prepared for  
Nevada Department of Education (NDE)

By  
WestEd

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This report summarizes the work completed by WestEd in fulfillment of year 1 of contract #3057 with the Nevada Department of Education (NDE) to conduct a validation study of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF). The report describes two distinct but related major activities: (1) a summary of beliefs/perceptions on several NEPF-related issues of a purposeful sample of Nevada educators obtained via surveys, interviews, and focus groups; and (2) WestEd's technical support of the further development of the NEPF's processes and tools, and of the field testing of its components from August 2013 through May 2014.

### **Background of the NEPF Validation Study**

*Key Decision Drivers for the Development of the NEPF.* Prior to 2010, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) created an accountability system that was heavy on identification and sanctioning, offering little in the way of supports for struggling schools and their educators. While NCLB attempted to set standards for “highly qualified teachers,” it did not set expectations beyond credentialing to evaluate individual educator performance. In response to this system and its outcomes, in 2011, the Nevada Legislature created the Teachers and Leaders Council (TLC), a multidisciplinary stakeholder group comprised of 15 educators, parents, and policymakers, in response to concerns about low K-12 student achievement throughout the state. The TLC was charged with submitting models for an educator evaluation system and creating standards of educator effectiveness to be used statewide and implemented uniformly across the state.

In 2011, Assembly Bill 222 (NRS 391.450-391.465) created the TLC and required them to submit models for teacher and school-based administrator evaluations to the State Board of Education for approval. AB 222 specifically stated that teachers and administrators are to be:

- Evaluated using multiple, fair, timely, rigorous, and valid methods, which include pupil achievement data (as required by NRS 386.650) to account for at least 50% of the evaluation
- Evaluated on use of practices and strategies to involve and engage the parents and families of pupils in the classroom
- Afforded a meaningful opportunity to improve their effectiveness through professional development that is linked to their evaluations
- Provided the means to share effective educational methods with other teachers and administrators throughout the State
- Classified under a four-tier design in which each teacher and administrator must be rated as highly effective, effective, minimally effective, or ineffective.

In response, a preliminary set of recommendations was presented to the Board on June 1, 2012, with final models presented to the Board on December 14, 2012. The work of the TLC resulted in the development of the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF).

Later that year, Nevada's Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Flexibility request was approved, officially marking an end to the school accountability system known as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP), and replacing it with the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF).

The creation of the TLC and the group's charge to develop models of teacher and administrator performance evaluation marked a notable shift in the model of effective teaching and leading practices for Nevada educators by building an accountability system comprised of educator inputs and student outcomes. During the same time, the Nevada School Performance Framework (NSPF), Nevada's new school accountability system, was being established. The NSPF classifies schools within a five-star performance rating system, and includes multiple measures of student achievement and growth, aligning the designations for schools to the delivery of appropriate supports and rewards. In this context of shifting (and overlapping) educational goals, the processes and tools that comprise the NEPF were developed.

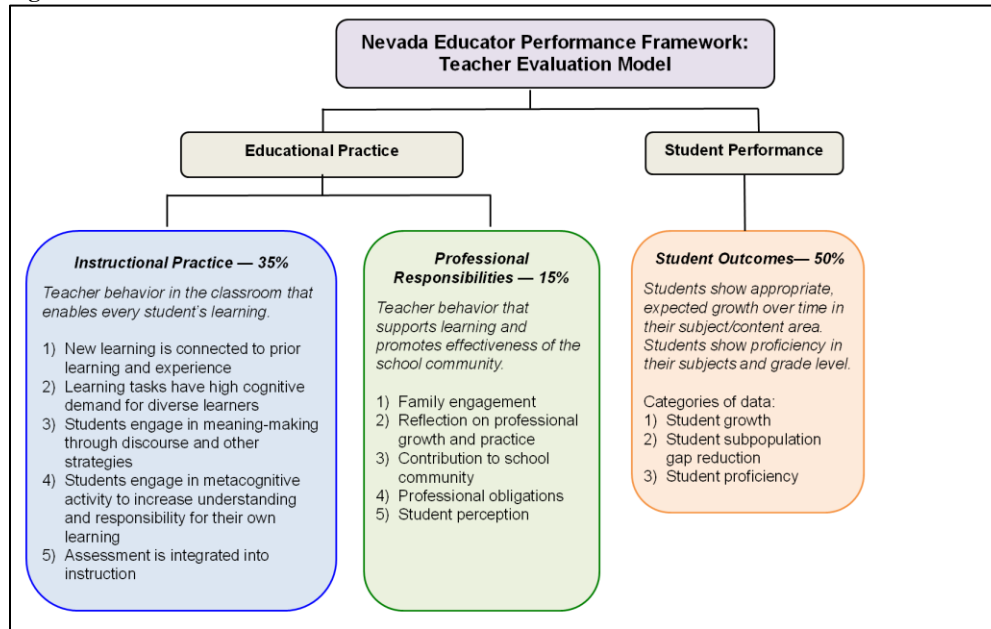
The NEPF was designed to be responsive to stakeholder input, and was guided by research, emerging policy, and nationally recognized expertise.<sup>1</sup> The TLC's work resulted in two models – one for teachers and one for school-based administrators – to establish the Nevada Educator Performance Framework (NEPF) with the vision of preparing students to be ready for 21<sup>st</sup> century competition in college and careers upon high school graduation. In 2013, these two models were presented to the State Board of Education, who adopted regulations to guide the Nevada Department of Education's implementation of the NEPF.

Under the TLC's leadership, each model of the NEPF was designed to strategically apply the performance assessment process to educators, whereby teachers and administrators obtain an overall effectiveness score measured in terms of instructional (leadership) practices (35% of the overall score), professional responsibilities (15% of the score), and student outcomes (50% of the score, the minimum required by legislature). See Figure 1 and Figure 2 below for a visual depiction of the standards in each model of the NEPF.

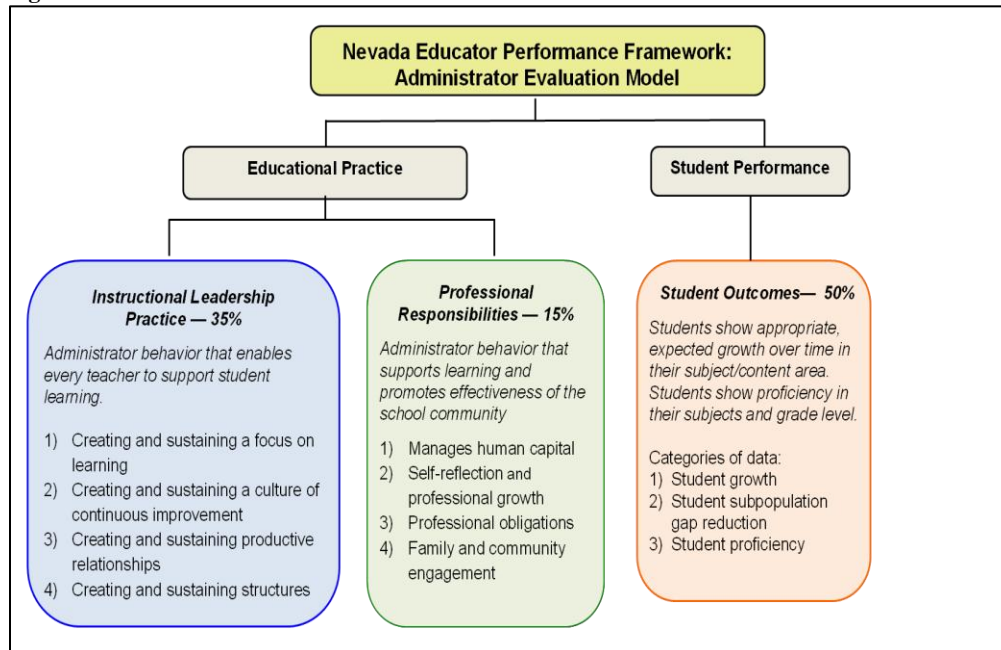
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<sup>1</sup> Organizations who provided their expertise and input in the development of the NEPF include the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO); the Center on Great Teachers and Leaders; the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST); the Assessment and Standards Development Services program at WestEd; the National Governors Association (NGA); and the West Comprehensive Center and Regional Educational Laboratory West at WestEd.

**Figure 1. Teacher Model of the NEPF**



**Figure 2. School-based Administrator Model of the NEPF**



Per the design of the NEPF, educator effectiveness is assessed through a ratings-based evaluation cycle, in which teachers and administrators are observed periodically<sup>2</sup> throughout the school year by their supervisors. The evaluation cycle includes:

- At least one observation in situ by supervisor(s);
- A self-assessment;
- Reflection meetings with supervisor(s) to discuss goals and make decisions about professional growth strategies;
- At least one evidence review meeting in which supervisor(s) appraise the artifacts the educator has collected to demonstrate having met educational practice standards;
- At least one educator professional growth planning and delivery meeting; and
- A summative evaluation.

Because the NEPF was designed to be a critical part of the State's educator professional growth system to enhance human capital and improve student outcomes, policymakers needed to validate the models TLC created to ensure that it meets the technical requirements of a high-stakes accountability system, and that its various components' effective weights match their desired nominal expectations. In May 2013, NDE solicited proposals to design and conduct a field test of the instruments and processes developed by the TLC to evaluate teachers and administrators, and to conduct a validation study of the NEPF. WestEd was selected as the contractor to perform this legislatively mandated study, and we reported our findings to NDE, TLC, and the Interim Finance Committee of the legislature. The primary focus of year 1 of the study was to determine if the NEPF was ready for full statewide live implementation in the 2014-15 school year, i.e., if it was capable of providing reliable, valid, and fair evaluations of teachers and administrators.

## Overview of This Report

The year 1 Scope of Work for this study included two major strands. Strand 1 involved technical support to NDE and TLC designed to complete the development of the NEPF model, focusing on methods for combining the various components of the model to reach an overall evaluation decision, establishing inter-rater reliability for educator effectiveness observations, and developing alternative approaches to measuring student achievement beyond the current emphasis on English/Language Arts and Mathematics statewide assessments. Strand 2 comprised obtaining the perceptions of a purposeful sample of Nevada educators on various aspects of the

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<sup>2</sup> The number and type of observations included as part of the evaluation cycle depends in part on educator classification (new/probationary, post-probationary, and experienced teachers).



NEPF, particularly their understanding of its components and their belief of its readiness for full rollout for the 2014-15 school year. This report describes WestEd's work related to both of these major strands, and concludes with the presentation of recommendations for Nevada policymakers to consider regarding next steps for the further development and implementation of the NEPF.

## II. YEAR 1 STUDY FINDINGS

### Contributions Culminating in School Site Visits and Educator Surveys

Throughout year 1, the WestEd evaluation team found the TLC to be an invaluable resource to help guide the validation study. To keep them fully informed, the team presented a series of briefings at each TLC meeting that took place throughout the year, beginning with an overview of the overall NEPF Validation Study design and objectives. (See Appendices A1–A5 for PowerPoint presentations delivered at all TLC meetings.)

#### *Sampling Plan*

As described in our approved Scope of Work, the year 1 field test of the NEPF was required to include at least ten percent of all educators in Nevada and participants from at least six school districts, including Washoe and Clark Counties, with the purpose of examining the alignment of the data collection instruments to the intent and specifications of the TLC, who developed these processes and instruments. The main purpose of the year 1 field test was to identify the extent to which the NEPF system (including its instrument, procedures, program, and training) has been implemented as intended; to analyze data (as available) to determine NEPF system ability to produce appropriate, valid, and reliable ratings; to identify the supports, training, data analysis, and infrastructure that NDE needs to put in place to ensure fidelity of implementation and sustainability; and to identify recommendations for refinements to system design and processes to meet NEPF goals and desired outcomes.

To fulfill these requirements, WestEd’s evaluation team composed a validation study participation invitation letter addressed to district superintendents (Appendix B), which was finalized and signed off on by NDE on September 8 and sent to district superintendents by NDE on September 9. Following the identification of the twelve initially participating districts—double the required amount—WestEd assisted NDE in drafting Memoranda of Understanding (examples are provided in Appendices C1 and C2) between the State and participating districts, outlining the requirements of study participation.

Following the identification of participating districts, WestEd developed a sampling plan designed to represent the diverse demographics of Nevada’s public schools. Sampling procedures included analyses of school size; grade span; racial/ethnic makeup; sizes of transient, LEP, FRL, and IEP populations; daily attendance; and (for high schools) graduation rates. Twelve school districts (a total of 124 schools) initially agreed to participate in the study, including schools from both Washoe and Clark Counties. Following the identification of the initial study population, WestEd staff worked with NDE staff and Dr. Pam Salazar, Chair of the TLC, to review the individual characteristics of the districts and schools in the initial study

population. This process resulted in a final study sample (93 schools<sup>3</sup>) that was highly representative of the overall Nevada school profile. The study sample was signed off on and approved by NDE on September 27. Characteristics of our sample in comparison with the overall Nevada school profile are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Comparison of school characteristics of all Nevada schools and validation study sample**

School Characteristic	All Nevada Schools	Final Validation Study Sample
<b>School Type/Level</b>	Elem Schools: 393 (56%) Middle Schools: 162 (23%) High Schools: 148 (21%)	Elem Schools: 58 (52%) Middle Schools: 21 (26%) High Schools: 14 (22%)
<b>School Size</b>	Mean Enrollment: 631 Range: 2–3093	Mean Enrollment: 677 Range 7–2993
<b>Socioeconomic Index</b>	Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch: 53.41%	Students Receiving Free/Reduced Lunch: 51.51%
<b>Special Education Classification</b>	Students with IEPs: 13.70%	Student with IEPs: 13.35%
<b>ELL Classification</b>	LEP Students: 14.69%	LEP Students: 15.51%
<b>Racial/Ethnic Makeup</b>	American Indian: 3% Asian: 4% Black: 9% Hispanic: 36% Mixed Race: 5% Pacific Islander: 1% White: 42%	American Indian: 2% Asian: 5% Black: 7% Hispanic: 36% Mixed Race: 5% Pacific Islander: 1% White: 44%
<b>Graduation Rate (High Schools only)</b>	71.8%	63.6%
<b>Student Transiency</b>	26.65%	24.22%
<b>Average Daily Attendance</b>	94.24%	94.56%
<b>CRT/HSPE Scores</b>	Reading Proficient: 64.84% Math Proficient: 63.04%	Reading Proficient: 67.93% Math Proficient: 66.54%
<b>Expenditures per Student</b>	Average: \$11,997.68 Median: \$8,427.12	Average: \$11,342.01 Median: \$8,233.81

<sup>3</sup> In November 2013, one district asked that one school be dropped from the study due to overburden. Also in that month, another district asked that all six of their schools originally in the study be dropped. As a result, the final validation study comprised 86 schools, still exceeding the required 10% sample.

WestEd provided an update on the progress of the NEPF Validation Study to the TLC at its meeting on October 1 in Las Vegas, detailing descriptions of characteristics of the finalized sample of participating schools and of the next steps for study implementation. The TLC provided its unanimous support of the study sample. Later that month, WestEd proposed a subsample of participating schools for the purposes of conducting school site visits to allow for conversations and interviews with teachers and school administrators that yield deeper and richer insights than do survey instruments about perceptions and experiences with the NEPF. Forty schools representing the demographic characteristics and geographic spread of all Nevada schools were identified for the subsample (Appendix D).<sup>4</sup> This subsample was signed off on by NDE on November 25.

Throughout the months of January, February, and March, WestEd contacted each principal of the 86 participating schools in the validation study to (1) confirm their receipt of the letter that WestEd emailed on December 18 describing the validation study and their participation; (2) discuss any questions or concerns that they had as a result of their participation; (3) identify and confirm a point of contact for their schools for potential visit scheduling and other study-related communications; and (4) schedule and confirm the date, time, and logistics for our school site visits for the forty schools in our subsample.

*Methods and Instrumentation.* To capture teachers' and school-based administrators' experiences with and impressions of the NEPF, the study used a three-pronged approach in collecting information from Nevada educators: the study employed a web-based educator survey, in-person interviews with principals, and teacher focus groups. Each of these methods for collecting information centered around asking the following three questions:

1. Have teachers and administrators received training and communication around the NEPF?
2. What are educators' impressions of and experiences with the NEPF standards and indicators, related to the training they received?
3. Based on the training they received, are they ready to implement the NEPF next year? Why or why not?

In February and March, WestEd worked with NDE to develop study instrumentation. The development was an iterative process, in which survey items, as well as focus group and interview protocols, were created and internally reviewed by WestEd, submitted to NDE for review and feedback, and then sent to NDE for approval before being presented to TLC on March 12 for their review and recommendations. NDE signed off on all interview and focus

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<sup>4</sup> For a side-by-side comparison of the demographic characteristics of all Nevada schools, our sample of 86 validation study schools, and our subsample of 40 schools to visit, see Appendix A3.

group protocols as well as survey items (found in Appendices E1–E3) on March 20. The online survey was subsequently launched on March 24.

From March 24 through April 28, WestEd staff conducted on-site interviews with principals and focus groups with teachers in 40 schools (22 elementary schools, 10 middle schools, and 8 high schools) across Nevada. Each interview and focus group was scheduled in advance, and interview or focus group questions were sent to principals ahead of each visit to maximize administrators' and teachers' level of comfort and preparation.

Each method used to collect data for our study is described below.

Web-based Educator Survey. The web-based educator survey comprised several multi-part items administered via email, available to all educators in each of the 86 schools participating in the validation study. Principals were emailed a link to the web-based survey (deployed via SurveyMonkey) and were given a full four weeks (from March 24 through April 18) to complete the survey. Each principal received multiple reminders to complete the survey, as well as to provide a link to other school staff (specifically for teachers and other school staff who were NOT linked to the principal's email address).

Teacher Focus Groups. Focus groups are designed to obtain diverse ideas and perceptions on a topic of interest in a relaxed, permissive environment that fosters the expression of different points of view. WestEd staff facilitated focus groups in 14 schools across 7 of the 11 districts participating in the validation study. Each focus group was comprised of four to eight teachers, depending on the size of the school. In each focus group, the facilitator used a script to walk participants through the process and to guide the interactive discussion. The goal of the focus group was to learn about teachers' training on the NEPF, their experiences and impressions of the Educational Practice domain of the NEPF, and their perceptions of their schools' and districts' readiness to implement the NEPF next year. In order to assure the anonymity of each participant, fictitious name badges were distributed to participants before the focus group began, and participants were referred to using only the fictitious names.

Principal Interviews. In each school visited as part of the validation study, WestEd staff conducted an interview with the school principal. In total, 40 interviews were conducted. In five of those, additional school-based administrators participated and provided information in response to interview prompts. The purpose of these interviews was to learn the extent to which school-based administrators were trained on the NEPF, and to determine their perceptions of their schools' and districts' preparedness for implementing the NEPF.

## *Results*

A total of 1,045 surveys were received: 97 from school-based administrators (out of a total of 156 school-based administrators in our participating sample of schools; a response rate of 62%),

and 948 from teachers (out of a total of 2,875 teachers in our participating sample of schools; a response rate of 33%).

Question 1: Have teachers and administrators received training and communication around the NEPF? Based on survey data, the vast majority of school-based administrators (93.6%) and teachers (80.2%) reported that they received training on the NEPF. Of those, administrators who reported receiving only RPDP-led training represented the largest percentage (27%). Many administrators received a combination of several training sessions on the NEPF: RPDP-led and self-guided training of the NEPF (10%), RPDP-led and district-led training (10%), and RPDP-led, district-led, school-led, and self-guided training (10%). Teachers who described their training as school led represented the largest percentage (47%), with another 14% receiving RPDP-led only training. Table 2 below details the ten types/combinations of training most frequently received by the participating educators.

**Table 2. NEPF-related training types (and combinations) most frequently received, by position<sup>5</sup>**

Training Type/Combination		Received by X% of Educators
<b>Teachers’ Top Ten</b>	School led only	47%
	RPDP led only	14%
	School led and Self-guided	6%
	RPDP led and School led	4%
	District led only	4%
	District led and School led	3%
	RPDP led and Self-guided	1%
	RPDP led and District led	1%
	RPDP led, District led, and School led	1%
	RPDP led, School led, and Self-guided	1%
<b>School-based Administrators’ Top Ten</b>	RPDP led only	27%
	RPDP led and Self-guided	11%
	RPDP led, District led, School led, and Self-guided	10%
	RPDP led and District led	10%
	RPDP led, District led, and Self-guided	9%
	District led only	5%
	RPDP led, School led, and Self-guided	3%
	RPDP led and School led	2%
	District led and School led	2%
	RPDP led, District led, and School led	2%

<sup>5</sup> No results are broken out by types of training because no significant differences were found across different training experiences.

Survey data, as well as interview and focus group data, indicate that study participants received varying amounts of training on the Educational Practice domain of the teacher evaluation model of the NEPF. Participants' training coverage can be separated into three groups:

1. Those who were trained on the first two Instructional Practice standards and indicators only;
2. Those who were trained on the whole set of Instructional Practice standards and indicators, but not the set for Professional Responsibilities; or
3. Those who were trained on both sets that comprise the Educational Practice domain.

**Table 3. Teachers' and administrators' ratings of ease/difficulty in aspects of NEPF training**

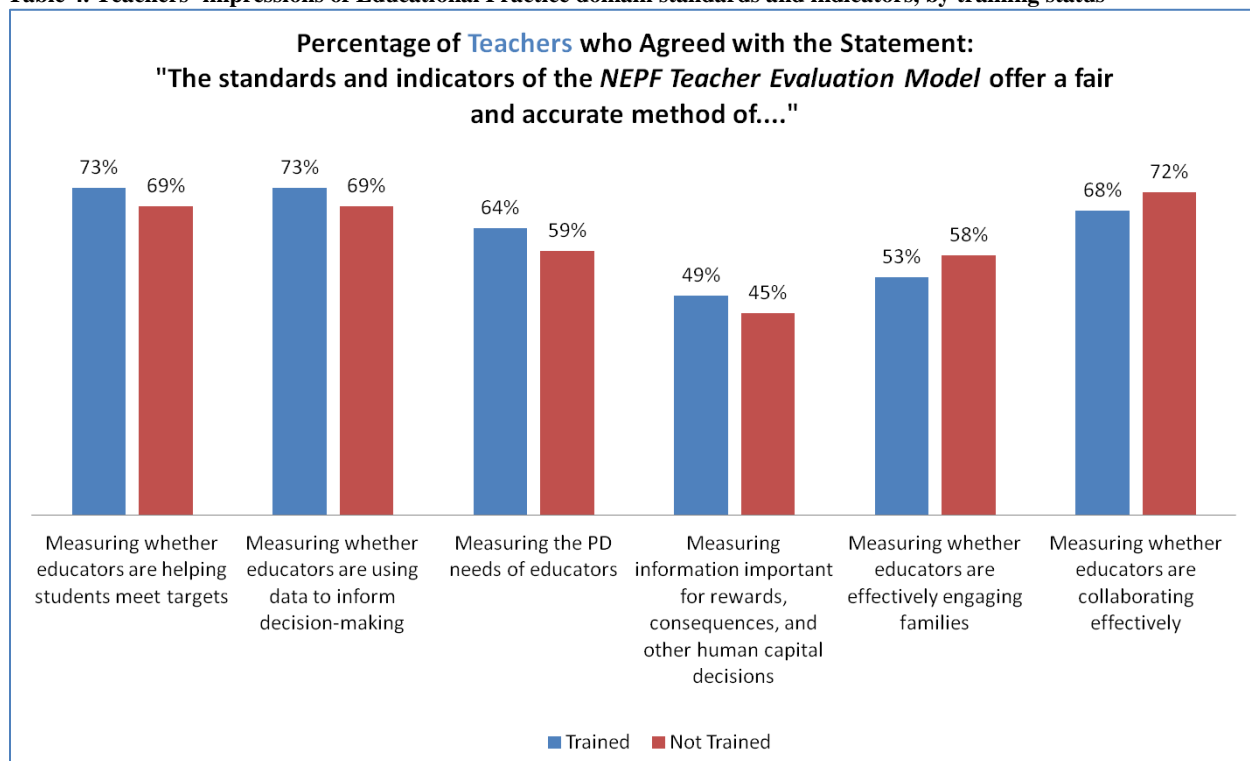
Aspect of NEPF Training		Difficult	Easy
<b>Accessing the materials</b>	Teachers:	28%	72%
	Administrators:	25%	75%
<b>Using the training handouts, vignettes, and videos</b>	Teachers:	29%	71%
	Administrators:	26%	74%
<b>Understanding the training handouts, vignettes, and videos</b>	Teachers:	34%	66%
	Administrators:	21%	79%
<b>Getting your NEPF-related questions answered</b>	Teachers:	37%	63%
	Administrators:	20%	80%
<b>Understanding the standards and indicators used to measure teacher performance</b>	Teachers:	40%	60%
	Administrators:	20%	80%
<b>Knowing where to go if you have questions about the NEPF</b>	Teachers:	43%	57%
	Administrators:	24%	76%

Table 3 above shows teachers' and administrators' ratings of ease and difficulty in various aspects of the NEPF training they received. As indicated above, most teachers (72%) and administrators (75%) found accessing the training materials easy, and most (71% of teachers and 74% of administrators) indicated that using the training handouts, vignettes, and videos was also easy. Forty-three percent of teachers and 24% of administrators found knowing where to go with questions about the NEPF to be difficult. Similarly, 37% of teachers and 20% of administrators found getting their NEPF-related questions answered to be difficult.

Question 2: What are educators' impressions of and experiences with the NEPF standards and indicators, related to the training they received? Overall, it appears that training does not

make a meaningful difference in teachers' impression of the fairness and accuracy of the NEPF's Educational Practice domain standards and indicators, but does make a difference in the impressions of school-based administrators. For example, based on survey data, 73% of trained teachers (and 69% of untrained teachers) agreed or strongly agreed that the standards and indicators of the Educational Practice domain fairly and accurately measure whether educators are helping students meet targets, and whether educators are using data to inform their instructional decisions. Table 4 below shows teachers' impressions of the Educational Practice domain's standards and indicators, by training status.

**Table 4. Teachers' impressions of Educational Practice domain standards and indicators, by training status**

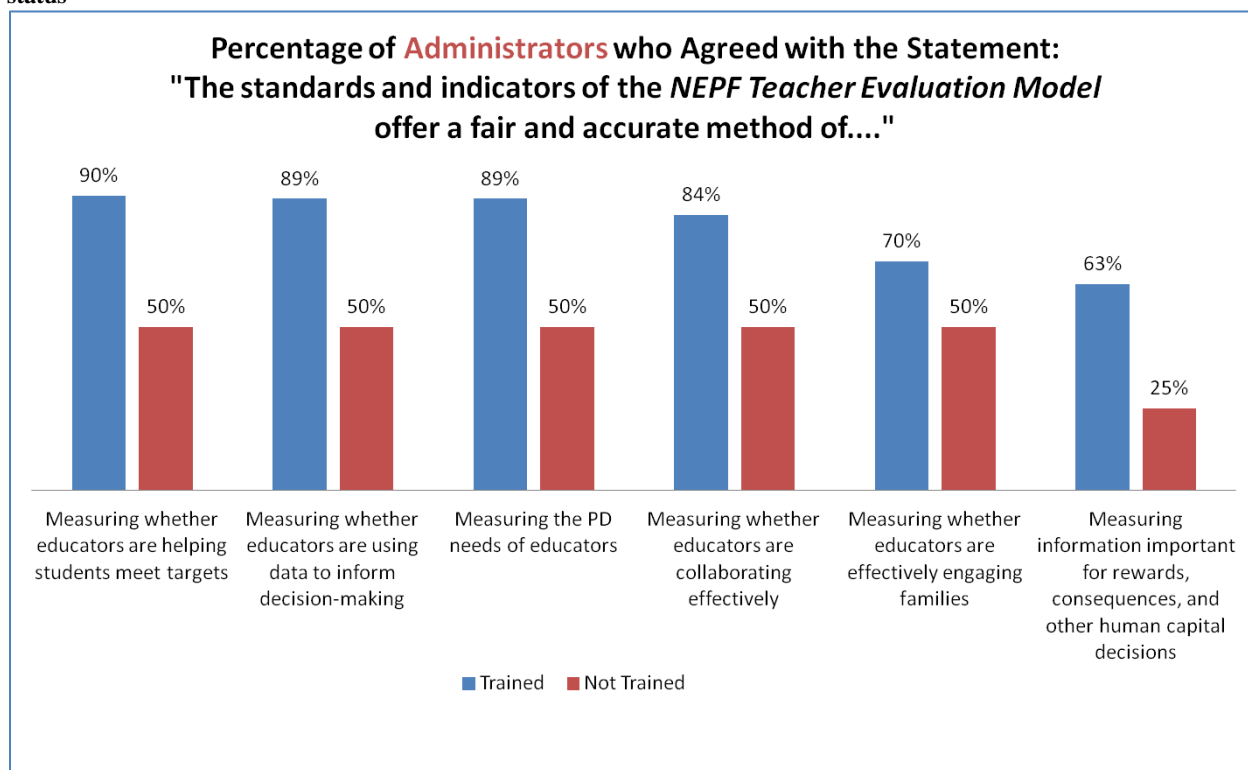


However, differences in the responses of trained and untrained school-based administrators to those same questions are much more pronounced. For example, 90% of trained administrators agreed or strongly agreed that the standards and indicators of the Educational Practice domain fairly and accurately measure whether educators are helping students meet targets, while only 50% of untrained administrators felt the same way. Further, 89% of the trained administrators (compared to only 50% of those untrained) agreed that the Educational Practice standards and indicators offer a fair and accurate measurement of whether educators are using data to inform their decision making. Given that the bulk of administrator trainings was either district led or RPDP led, while the teacher trainings were mostly school-based, these results suggest that whether or not training was received impacts educators' impressions of the fairness and accuracy of the NEPF standards and indicators rather the type of training they



received. Table 5 below demonstrates administrators' impressions of the standards and indicators, based on their training.

**Table 5. School-based administrators' impressions of Educational Practice domain standards and indicators, by training status**



Based on information gleaned from school site visits, in most (70%) of the focus groups, teachers generally describe the standards and indicators of the Educational Practice domain of the NEPF's teacher evaluation model as a "model for good teaching" or a "set of good teaching practices." Overall, data collected suggests that the majority of teachers believe the standards and indicators to be a fair and accurate measure of teacher performance.

However, some teachers in focus groups indicated concerns about the indicators contained in the Educational Practice domain. For example, in some of the more rural high school and middle school focus groups, in which teachers received minimal or no training, teachers voiced apprehensions about NEPF creating "cookie cutter" teachers, somehow removing creativity from the classroom with implementation of this set of uniform standards and indicators. Further, in one small elementary school in which teachers received training only in the first two standards of the Instructional Practice domain, teachers in the focus group voiced apprehension about how kindergarten and pre-k teachers will be evaluated, believing that the standards and indicators are most applicable to teachers who teach tested grades and subjects. These results seem to suggest

that teachers with little or no NEPF-related training report more apprehensions and concerns about implementing the NEPF than do teachers who have received more training coverage.

**Question 3: Are educators ready to implement the NEPF next year? Why or why not?**

Based on information obtained from survey data, as described in Table 6 (below), the majority of administrators and teachers who received NEPF training indicate that, based on their training, they do not feel ready to implement the NEPF. See table 6 below

**Table 6. Educators' reported readiness to implement the NEPF, by position**

	Teachers <i>n</i> (%)	School-based Administrators <i>n</i> (%)
<b>Ready to Implement</b>	404 (49.9%)	33 (39.8%)
<b>Not Ready to Implement</b>	406 (50.5%)	50 (60.2%)

While teachers indicated via survey more readiness to implement the NEPF than their administrator counterparts, their sentiments shared in focus groups indicate that they have many concerns about full NEPF implementation, but see it as a “foregone conclusion” that the NEPF will be implemented next year.

While surveys indicate that only a slight majority of teachers feel unprepared to implement the NEPF, in 12 of the 14 teacher focus groups conducted, teachers indicated feelings of unpreparedness and apprehension about implementing the NEPF next year. Many teachers in focus groups, particularly those who have received little training, indicated feelings of unpreparedness related to concerns about the “unknowns” of student outcomes measurement, or have general apprehensions about implementing a new evaluation system. Administrators, with and without training, indicated a feeling of unpreparedness to implement the NEPF based on their need for more time to understand the system, and for more training for themselves and their staff.

Further, in nearly all of the focus groups and interviews in which participants indicated being ready to implement the NEPF next year, teachers and administrators qualified their response by saying that, since implementing the NEPF “is inevitable” and “right around the corner,” they are required to “get ready” and “go for it.” These educators seemed to temper their level of readiness for implementation (e.g., their apprehensions with unknowns about the evaluation rubric, how the system will calculate scores including student growth, etc.) with their desire to “learn by doing” and “experience it rather than just read about it on paper.”

When asked via survey whether their schools need more resources in order to effectively carry out the NEPF, only 34% percent of teacher survey respondents, and only 12% of administrator survey respondents, agreed that their school has sufficient support in place to implement the NEPF in the next school year. Further, 66% of teachers and 87% of administrators disagreed that the training they received for the NEPF adequately prepared them to implement the system next year.

In our focus groups and interviews, teachers and school-based administrators who indicated that they are not ready to implement the NEPF were able to share their reasons. (See Table 7 below for the frequently cited concerns about NEPF implementation contributing to educators’ feelings of unpreparedness.)

**Table 7. Teachers’ and school-based administrators’ reported concerns about implementing the NEPF**

Concern/Apprehension	Mentioned in <i>n</i> (%) of Teacher Focus Groups	Mentioned in <i>n</i> (%) of Principal Interviews
<b>More training needed prior to implementation</b>	13 (93%)	34 (85%)
<b>Concerns re: NEPF “unknowns”</b>	13 (93%)	30 (75%)
<b>Too many initiatives</b>	10 (71%)	15 (38%)
<b>Lack of time to adequately gather artifacts</b>	7 (50%)	34 (85%)
<b>Subjectivity in NEPF language</b>	7 (50%)	15 (38%)
<b>“Cookie cutter” model for teachers</b>	6 (43%)	3 (8%)
<b>Concerns about calibration and inter-rater reliability</b>	4 (29%)	18 (45%)
<b>Apprehension re: use of new (rather than established) evaluation system</b>	3 (20%)	6 (15%)

Overall, teachers and principals frequently cited the following reasons:

- *Need for more training.* In all but one focus group, teachers reported feeling underprepared for NEPF implementation given the training they received. Similarly, in 34 of the 40 interviews, principals reported wanting additional training for themselves and their school staff. Even when they described very positively the thoroughness and usefulness of the training they received, many principals still reported feeling that more training was needed. This sentiment reported by teachers and administrators appeared to be less about the quality of the training and more about the amount of information they perceive they will need in order to implement the NEPF with fidelity.
- *Too many “unknowns” about how the NEPF will be implemented.*<sup>6</sup> When asked why they felt unprepared to implement the NEPF, teachers in 13 of the 14 focus groups mentioned

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<sup>6</sup> Despite being asked to limit their responses to their impressions of the Educational Practice domain only, both teachers and administrators voiced concerns about how student outcomes would be measured. In fact, this “unknown” is what teachers voiced

not knowing how student outcomes would be measured and indicated frequently that student growth measures (i.e., course grades and standardized test scores) are often based on factors “outside of [their] control.” Teachers also mentioned concern about not knowing how the effectiveness of school counselors, special education teachers, and other specialized teaching staff will be measured. Seventy-five percent of principals in interviews also expressed concerns about the portions of NEPF instrumentation that have not been rolled out to them or that they are otherwise unaware of (i.e., the evaluation rubric, the NEPF training that their academic managers have received, and student growth measures).

- *Too many other initiatives also being implemented.* Teachers in ten schools and principals in 15 schools communicated a sense of overwhelm and burden when describing the number and frequency of rollout of school reform initiatives. Many teachers and principals reported being overwhelmed by the prospect of adding implementation of the NEPF to the other new initiatives or reform efforts currently under way at their schools.
- *Uneasiness about subjectivity in the NEPF language.* In half of the focus groups, at least one teacher voiced concern about the use of the word “all” in many of the Level 4 (the level required to be met to receive a “highly effective” rating) Educational Practice indicators. These teachers reported feeling that use of superlative language in the NEPF standards and indicators makes the instrumentation too subjective, and indicated that literally reaching, impacting, or activating the engagement of *all* students, for example, is unrealistic and implausible. School-based administrators in 15 schools expressed similar concerns.
- *Not enough time to collect all the necessary artifacts/evidence.* School-based administrators in 34 (85%) of the interviews reported concern about the time it will take to collect artifacts and conduct observations. Particularly in large schools, where there are many teachers and few other school administrators (e.g., assistant principal, dean), principals expressed great apprehensions about being able to observe all teachers and still be effective in other school management and professional leadership responsibilities. Furthermore, many principals indicated that the kinds of evidence required as part of the NEPF marks a vast departure from their current principal and teacher evaluation system and wondered how their supervisors/academic managers will have enough time to adequately review principals’ artifacts and evidence. Teachers in half of the focus groups perceived based on their training that the amount of artifacts and evidence needed to substantiate meeting or exceeding standards will take more time than they currently have.

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the most concerns about. Administrators voiced concerns over “unknowns” including measures of student and parent perception, rubric- and indicator-level scoring, as well as student growth measurement.

- *General concerns about reducing teacher creativity.* In six focus groups, teachers across the districts mentioned that they believed the NEPF would reduce teacher creativity in their classrooms. In their perception, adherence to the standards will elicit a “cookie cutter” effect, in which teachers will be expected to “fill the same mould,” and teachers’ spontaneity and creativity will be thwarted. Only three principals mentioned this concern.
- *Concerns re: inter-rater reliability and calibration.* Teachers in four focus groups (29%) reported concerns about how inter-rater reliability would be established in their evaluation cycles and observations of their classroom performance. A greater proportion of principals (45%) reported inter-rater reliability and calibration of the NEPF instrumentation as a concern. At least four principals discussed their ideas for a systematic effort to make sure that ratings based on observations and consideration of artifacts be calibrated school-, district-, and statewide.
- *Trust in developing a new, rather than an established, evaluation system.* In three focus groups and six interviews, educators wondered why an already validated evaluation system was not adopted for use in Nevada, and voiced concerns about the trustworthiness of a new educator effectiveness system. Some of these teachers and principals were trained using other educator effectiveness measurement tools, and reported misgivings about the need for and usefulness of a newly developed model when many others already exist and have been fully vetted.

Taken together, these results indicate that, while there is familiarity with the NEPF’s standards and indicators across teachers and administrators in validation study schools (particularly among those who have received NEPF-related professional development training), additional training is critical in establishing and maintaining administrators’ and teachers’ positive impressions of the NEPF as a whole. Secondly, in nearly every district, teachers and administrators indicate that they are not ready to implement the NEPF and cite myriad reasons, including the need for more training, resources, and time to adequately gather the necessary NEPF-related artifacts and evidence of their performance.

## Technical Support for Building the NEPF Model

Per the year 1 Scope of Work, WestEd provided TLC and NDE technical support regarding building a sound system in which accountability decisions at the student, school, and educator level are aligned, coherent, logical, and defensible. The section below describes the work completed by WestEd to help inform NDE's decisions for making NEPF scoring decisions, as well as establishing inter-rater reliability of NEPF observation cycles, creating Group 1 and Group 2 teacher decision rules, and considering alternative assessments to measure student performance.

*NEPF Scoring Models.* WestEd provided the advantages and disadvantages of various scoring models for the NEPF, given its design that one rating must reflect effectiveness across three distinct domains (Instructional/Leadership Practices, Professional Responsibilities, and Student Outcomes). WestEd and NDE worked together to present information about the pros and cons of compensatory and conjunctive scoring methodologies at the January 2014 TLC meeting. The goals of the presentation were to establish a baseline understanding about the issues regarding scoring for the TLC meeting attendees, and to initiate a discussion about which, if either, model best reflects the values of the TLC and best allows NDE to measure educator effectiveness fairly and consistently.

Based on TLC preferences, WestEd presented at the May TLC meeting the pros and cons of using either a summative scoring model (in which the weighted scores for each domain of the NEPF are added to produce one final score) or a decision matrix model (in which ratings are plotted in rows and columns representing each domain, and an overall score is derived by examining the relationships of the intersecting row and column values). As a result of this meeting, TLC moved to approve a decision matrix scoring model.

*Considerations for Inter-rater Reliability.* WestEd presented information about the NEPF and factors impacting inter-rater reliability of observation cycles at the October 2013 TLC meeting. There, WestEd's goals were three-fold:

1. To familiarize attendees with the key terms related to inter-rater reliability,
2. To present and discuss both training-related and instrumentation-related factors affecting inter-rater reliability, and
3. To assist NDE in determining their next steps towards statewide rollout of their observation protocol, including training and inter-rater reliability computation.

*Considering Alternative Measures of Student Achievement.* At the May TLC meeting, WestEd presented information about alternative methods for determining student performance, other than

full reliance on state administered ELA and Mathematics assessments. The purpose of this presentation was to:

1. Indicate the various approaches states are employing to measure student outcomes for all educators, including those in “non-tested” grades and content areas,
2. Describe the advantages and disadvantages of each approach, and
3. Provide some overall considerations, regardless of the option(s) selected.

### **III. YEAR 1 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the results of the surveys, interviews, and focus groups, as well as deliberations at TLC meetings, we conclude the following:

The large majority of Nevada educators expressed the need for more time and more training in preparation for successful implementation of the NEPF and do not believe they are ready to implement with the infrastructure currently existing and the resources currently available to them. In addition, several essential technical and logistical considerations to support implementation have not been fully developed at this time. **Given that, the WestEd evaluation team recommends a delay in full implementation of the NEPF for (at least) one year.**

The delay would allow expanded NEPF-related professional development training opportunities and options for school-based administrators and teachers. This would require continued and increased support from RPDs and other sources (state, local, and private) to provide training and resources to schools as they prepare for full implementation.

During this period NDE, with TLC and WestEd support, can continue to make the decisions necessary to complete the full development of the NEPF model, including NEPF standards- and rubric-level scoring rules; the development and implementation of the necessary NEPF data systems and infrastructure; criteria for Group 1, 2, and 3 teachers; the establishment of inter-rater reliability for teacher and administrator observations; and the resolving of technical issues related to the use of student growth measures for educator evaluations.

NDE must make challenging decisions regarding the full scoring model for NEPF, and must do so in order to accommodate the necessary training and preparation needed to implement the NEPF, particularly if NDE intends to implement fully in the next school year. While looking to other states’ models, particularly those that use rubrics and other comparable metrics of teacher and administrator effectiveness, NDE must continue building and validating business rules about standard- and indicator-level scoring to generate an overall effectiveness rating that reflects each of the NEPF domains based on TLC and State Board expectations. WestEd will continue to work with NDE and TLC to present options for scoring at the indicator and standard levels, as well as

to make decisions about combining or weighting observation scores as part of the computation of summative scores.

The data systems necessary to accommodate the myriad data needs that implementation of the NEPF will create have not yet been developed. Moreover, these systems' requirements regarding data storage, access, analysis, linkage to other data sets (e.g., NSPF), and ongoing maintenance must also be thought through carefully. NDE has considered storing and maintaining NEPF data at the district level, requiring that uniform business rules be established to assure statewide uniformity in the handling of NEPF data. NDE must consider carefully the options when creating such business rules to minimize the chance for differences in districts' data access or utilization. NDE must implement a model for moving these decisions forward, taking into account the range of expertise, experience, and resources available at the district level across the State.



## **IV. APPENDICES**